



CHANCELLOR'S NOTES

Chancellor Rhee's regular newsletter on learning, schools and system-wide reforms in DC Public Schools

February 17, 2010

Snow-Clearing Heroes and Snow-Bound Learning

Last week Washington, DC was slammed with two blizzards. This winter has seen more snow than ever before, and our nation's capital just surpassed Buffalo, NY in snowfall totals. After a week out of school, students returned Tuesday.

In urban districts like ours, where students on the whole are academically behind their suburban peers, losing learning time hits us harder than in the suburbs. Some research even suggests that students' use of out-of-school time is a prime culprit for achievement gaps that fall along racial and socioeconomic lines.

In between conference calls and a yard full of snow angels, I learned that many of our students were telecommuting in their own ways, thanks to the many parents and teachers who worked with them from home. One physics teacher at Phelps used email and voice mail to keep parents up-to-date so students would not lose academic ground in an unplanned week out of school. We also posted ideas for [home learning on our website](#), and parents responded to share what they were doing with other parents.

As we all are feeling the strain of newly discovered shoveling muscles, we can especially appreciate the heroic work custodians have accomplished over the past week and a half.

Last week they cleared more than 35 inches of snow from the sidewalks and entryways around their schools. After the first blizzard last Saturday, they actually had school sidewalks clear of almost



Mark Collar, maintenance foreman at Luke C. Moore Academy, was snowed in at the school on Feb. 10 and spent the night there. The next morning, he cleared all steps, sidewalks and parking areas and he spent the rest of the day answering phones.

30 inches of snow by Monday, while surrounding districts had only begun to clear out. I hope everyone in schools will take a moment this week to recognize their tremendous efforts.

To everyone who worked with us through a challenging week for the entire city, thank you for your work and for your patience. Here's hoping that snow angels will soon yield to sunshine and spring.

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